



THE CHURCH OF ST. MADELEINE, PARIS.

THE present edifice is the fourth in succession that has occupied the same site. The earliest was of the thirteenth century, at which period it stood at some distance from the city, upon a domain of the bishop, and from that circumstance was designated "de la Ville l'Evêque." Towards the close of the fifteenth century Ville l'Evêque had become a suburb of Paris, and the old church, or rather chapel, was razed to make way for a larger, of which the first stone was laid in 1487, by Charles the Eighth. Here Charles the Ninth established a religious community called that of St. Madeleine, into which himself and his Queen, Ann of Bohagne, were afterwards received. Nearly two centuries subsequent, Ville l'Evêque was constituted a parish, and in 1659 the church was again taken down and replaced by one of which the first stone was laid by Ann Marie Louise D'Orleans, under the title of the Church of St. Madeleine. At length the vast increase of population rendering even this church insufficient, it was in 1764 determined to replace it by an edifice on a scale commensurate with the requirements of the public frequenting religious services in this quarter of the city, and Constant D'Ivry being appointed the architect, laid the first stone on the 15th August of that year. "This new monument," says an eminent French writer, "is the noblest erected in the capital since the time of Louis the Fourteenth." Events, however, occurred to impede its progress; first, the death of D'Ivry, and secondly, the Revolution. From this period until France assumed the rank of an empire under Napoleon, the building of St. Madeleine had been suspended; by his command it was resumed; "It shall be," said he, "a temple erected to commemorate the glory of the French armies." To Pierre Vignon he confided the work, and placed at his disposal ample funds for its prosecution. After the death of Vignon, who was interred under the portal of the building, M. Huvé was appointed architect; he had been associated with Vignon from the commencement, and his ability had been confirmed by the recommendation of his predecessor as the person best qualified to carry forward the original design to completion.

This vast monument forms a parallelogram of one hundred mètres in length, by forty-five in breadth, rising from a substructure of four mètres in height; it is supported by fifty-two fluted columns of the Corinthian order, fifteen mètres in height, and five mètres in circumference. The peristyle is formed by a double row of columns; each front of the edifice presents eight columns, and each of its sides eighteen columns; the grand entrance is approached by an ascent of thirty steps divided

* The French metre is equal to 3 feet 3 inches and 371 decimal parts of an inch.

into two flights. Nothing can be more imposing than the *coup d'œil* of this façade, adorned with all of excellence that sculpture could produce. The interior is lighted by three cupolas, each enriched by sculptures of four of the apostles. There are no perforations in the external walls, but there are niches for statues at each intercolumniation throughout the circuit of the building. The frieze is composed of angels holding garlands, intermixed with religious emblems; the cymatium, or superior member of the cornice, is ornamented with lions' heads and palm branches. A bas-relief of nineteen figures decorates the pediment of the principal front, the other is plain; and in this part of the structure an interior space has been devised to serve as a belfry without destroying the symmetry of the building.

The bas-relief on the pediment of the principal front is by Lemaire, and is upwards of thirty-eight mètres in extent, and seven mètres in height to the angle; the chief figure, the Saviour, being five mètres and a half in height; the subject is the pardon of Mary Magdalen, enriched with numerous figures, attributes, and emblems, and the inscription *ECCE DIES SALUTIS*. The great door, matchless, say the French writers, in vastness of proportions and in enrichments, was designed and executed in bronze by De Triquet, assisted by Richard, Eck, and Durand; it is ten mètres in height, and five in width; the imposts and panels are inscribed with the commandments, each illustrated by an appropriate subject from the text of Scripture—as an example, the commandment, "Thou shalt not kill," is accompanied by a representation of the killing of Abel, and the malediction of Cain: "Thou shalt not steal," by Joshua punishing the theft of Achan, after the capture of Jericho, &c. Statues of St. Philippe and St. Louis are placed to the right and left of this magnificent door-way. The niches of the intercolumniations on the exterior of the building, to the number of twenty-eight, are occupied by statues of the principal saints of the Roman Calendar, executed by the most celebrated artists. This, it may be observed, was truly a work of emulation among the sculptors of France. In the large number of statues just mentioned no instance of repetition by the same hand occurs; it was a great occasion, of which advantage was taken by the presiding spirit of the French nation to stimulate and reward the arts.

The vestibule of entrance displays three splendid bas-reliefs, those of the theological virtues, Faith, Hope, and Charity, by Guer-sent, Lequien, and Brion.

The body of the church consists of a nave deriving light from the three cupolas previously mentioned; the entrance is by an inte-

rior archway at the extremity of which are, on one side, a chapel for marriages, and on the other, a similar reserved space for baptisms. A miniature Ionic order prevails in the divisions occurring in the nave, which comprises six lateral chapels, three on either hand; and the six semicircular spaces above the chapels are filled by paintings representing the life of the Magdalen. Opposite the great door-way, centrally placed, and facing the spectator on his entrance, is the high altar.

As a whole, the interior of the Church of St. Madeleine is remarkable for the magnificence of its decorations in gold and marbles, sculptures, and paintings. A balustrade of white marble surmounts the various interior constructions and adornments resting against the external walls. The roof is entirely of iron and copper.

The object of the designer (*l'auteur*) of this great composition has been to bring under view the personages and events that have most essentially concurred in the establishment and maintenance of the Christian faith, and to impress conviction that its influence has always tended to the well-being and happiness of nations, and of society. The vast space upon which his genius has been exercised, aided by the talent of more than fifty of the most able contemporary artists, exhibits in sculpture and painting the history of the church and of her champions. Upon the frontal pediment, and to the right of the Saviour, Mary Magdalen is seen on her knees, in the attitude of a repentant sinner; but pardon and grace having already been vouchsafed, three angels extend below the clouds upon which they are borne a scroll, with the divine sentence *INEXIT MERTUM*. Similar expression pervades the decoration with which the edifice abounds; a history, indeed, of the institution and progress of Christianity, and a personification of its chiefs, the heroes of the crusades, and the saints and martyrs of the church. In the arrangement of this superb mass of mural painting, great judgment is displayed. On the concave recess before which the altar is placed, there is introduced, with surprising effect, a repetition of Christ and the repentant Magdalen, and other scriptural personages, so disposed as to form a great circle around the central point, where are celebrated the mysteries of religion.

The last group of this great composition is consecrated to Napoleon; the emperor is receiving his crown from the hands of Pope Pius VII.; the Bishop of Genes holds the concordat, and near him are the legate Cardinal Caprara, and Cardinal Braschi.

The labours of the designer closed at this point. Upon a pedestal he has inscribed the year of the reign of Louis Philippe, in which they terminated, together with his name.